

Dylan Willoughby

Tidepooling with Julian

We are the *litorei* — shore dwellers —
Slipping in cobbled pools, bracing for waves
You grasp on to me as the ocean swells
As we wade out to the rock benches
The sea has hewn without hands or chisel
See there: the brick-red barnacles cling
To the rocks by their own cementing
And just below, the blue-banded hermit
Hurrying towards an abandoned shell
Yes, he's "house-hunting" as the tide recedes,
Not a hermit now, you're right, but a lost
Recluse, as the swash tangles us in boa kelp
And bladder wrack, we're really in the soup!
I show you a striped shore crab creviced
And you recoil for fear of being pinched
A sea hare saunters by, its mantle flowing
With the water's riffle — you toss it some sea lettuce
Then leap when a wooly sculpin darts between your feet
And we're unfastened from our perch, loosed
Into the sea, a real "mesh," we joke —
A brown pelican croaks that the joke's on us —
So much for our weak holdfasts, slipshod anchors
But we're here to lose our moorings anyway
And there you find a green anemone
A blossom of tentacled venom
That doesn't dissuade you from poking its mouth



You scrape your hands along a splayed ochre star
Until, under the fronds of murky surfgrass
You find the thing you've been looking for
A two-spotted octopus brooding in its den

Pine^o
POETRY
NORTHEAST